Identity formation in a multicultural university residential hall: an ethnographic narrative inquiry of a local-non-local 'hybrid'

Kevin Wai-Ho Yung

Centre for Applied English Studies, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Full Postal address: 6.28 Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong SAR

Telephone: (+852)39174078

Email: wyunghku@hku.hk

Notes on contributor:

Kevin Wai-Ho Yung teaches English for Academic and Specific Purposes at the Centre for Applied English Studies, The University of Hong Kong. He resides in a university hall with students as a Senior Resident Tutor. His research interests include internationalisation in higher education, learning motivation, language assessment and shadow education.

Identity formation in a multicultural university residential hall: an ethnographic narrative inquiry of a local-non-local 'hybrid'

Internationalisation has recently become one of the major developmental goals within many institutions of higher education, where the use of languages on campus plays an important role. While research focusing on the use of English in higher education is growing, little attention has been paid to out-of-class contexts. This paper reports on the identity formation of an undergraduate who lived in a multicultural residential hall on an English-medium campus in Hong Kong through ethnographic narrative inquiry. The combination of ethnographic observations and informal talks with the participant in the research field for a two-year period, the participant's Facebook posts and photographs as records of his hall life and three intensive face-to-face interviews generated rich data for the inquiry. The participant was described as a local-non-local 'hybrid' because of his dual identity of being both local and non-local. Drawing on Wenger's framework of social theory of identity formation, this paper revealed the challenges of internationalisation in higher education through the perspective of the 'hybrid' with both local and non-local identities. An important implication arising from the study is the need to take a closer look at cultural integration and internationalisation in out-of-class contexts.

Keywords: identity; higher education; internationalisation; out-of-class contexts; English as a lingua franca; hall residence

最近，國際化成為了高等教育主要發展目標之一，而在校園內所使用的語言扮演重著要角色。雖然有關在高等教育英語使用的研究越來越多，但其對課室外的情況關注不足。透過民族志敘事探究(ethnographic narrative inquiry)，本文報告一位居住在大學宿舍的本科生的身分形成。這所位於香港的大學以英語授課，而其宿舍住著不同國家的學生。數據來自兩年的觀察、與參加者的非正式會談、參與者的臉書帖子和照片及三次密集的訪談。因為有著本地和非本地生的雙重身份，這位參與者被形容為本地及非本地的「混合生」(hybrid)。本文借用 Wenger 的身分形成社會理論，以這位「混合生」的角度揭示高等教育國際化的挑戰。本研究對課室外文化融合和國際化起著重要影響。

Introduction

Under the trend of promoting internationalisation within institutions of higher education, there has been a boom in the number of international students around the world in the past two decades (Jiang, 2008; Knight, 2013). In many Asian universities, internationalisation has become one of the major goals (Law, 1996; Rivers, 2010; Tham & Kam, 2008; Wang, 2013). Being the 'Asia's world city', Hong Kong has also witnessed the necessity to promote itself as an internationalised and vibrant higher education sector (Oleksiyenko, Cheng, & Yip, 2012; University Grants Committee, 2004). With the increasing number of non-local students on campus, English is becoming more important as a common language, or a *lingua franca*[1], not only for academic and knowledge exchange in-class but also for everyday communication in social contexts. This, however, may create difficulties for students, both local and non-local, who do not speak English as their first language. A global survey conducted by the International Association of Universities listed language barriers as one of the greatest obstacles to internationalisation in the Asia-Pacific region (Egron-Polak, Hudson, & International Association of Universities, 2010). On a multicultural campus, the use of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) does not necessarily lead to internationalisation and cultural integration. On the contrary, it may lead to cultural segregation or even identity crisis (Pellegrino, 2005). Language choice has a strong impact on how language users perceive their own and others' identities and the relationships among students. This is particularly evident in students' living environment within a multicultural and multilingual university, where they spend a significant amount of time interacting with one another on a day-to-day basis (Yang & Chau, 2011). While recent research focusing on the use of English in higher education is growing, especially in Asia-Pacific regions (see Kirkpatrick,

2014), little attention has been paid to out-of-class contexts, which are equally important in understanding cultural integration in higher education (Tsui, 2014).

This article is based on the findings from a two-year ethnographic study which explored the out-of-class university life of ten undergraduates from a variety of backgrounds. To illustrate and allow a more in-depth understanding of their everyday life, this paper reports on an ethnographic narrative inquiry of the identity formation of Martin,[2] a Hong Kong born undergraduate who came back from Australia to study at a Hong Kong English-medium university as a local student.[3] Martin was selected as a single-case study and described as a 'hybrid' because of his unique dual identity as both a local and non-local resident. Such an identity could also allow him to evaluate the current situation of cultural integration in an undergraduate residential hall from both the local and non-local perspectives. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation, this study examines Martin's two-year experience living in the hall and the processes he struggled with between local and non-local identities in relation to cultural diversity and the use of languages in the context. To this end, I will first introduce the theoretical framework and outline the research context and methodology for the inquiry before exploring the complexities of Martin's identity formation.

Theoretical framework

Wenger's (1998) framework of social ecology of identity divides the process of identity formation into identification and negotiability. Identification refers to 'the process through which modes of belonging become constitutive of our identities by creating bonds or distinctions in which we become invested' (p. 191). It involves an ongoing construction of selves through both participation and non-participation in

daily social events. It is not only associated with people to people interactions but also their existence in the social contexts, including their living environment, in which they are identifying themselves as well as being identified. Such a reificative process of identification leads to categorisation, either active or passive, of members in social groups. Categorisation results in labelling or stereotyping through which similar and different attributes of various groups are identified (Hogg, 2012). It influences identity construction through the way people perceive who they are and who other people are in categorised social groups. Hogg (2012) argued that social categorisation depersonalises individuals by making them identify themselves and others "as having the attributes of a category" (p. 509).

Wenger (1998) explores the concept of identification in three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination and alignment. Through engagement, we relate ourselves to other people in order to get a sense of who we are. Engaging in practice facilitates identity construction through our judgement of how we should participate in activities and the competence required. The lack of competence in full engagement, however, may lead to marginalisation. Therefore, identification through engagement is the mutuality of a two-way process which can lead to identity harmonisation or conflict. Imagination is a process beyond engagement, relating our experience to broader contexts and creating a trajectory of identity formation which connects our past and present experiences to representations of the future. It can lead to, in Wenger's term, 'a sense of affinity', connecting us with others and the context, or dissociation and non-participation if the future representation conflicts with our current practices. The imagined picture is resulted from our practices and 'in turn determines how we understand our engagement in practice' (p. 195). Alignment involves power and combines allegiance and compliance. It requires us to invest our

energy in the community through participation in line with the broader context. It affects our identities in that the power created by the majority may lead to oppression against those minority who may feel obliged to follow the norm.

Negotiability is another fundamental component in the process of identity formation. Wenger (1998) defines it as 'the ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration' (p. 197). Meanings are produced and adopted through participation and engagement, and their value is determined through the 'economies of meanings' in which different individuals have a certain degree of control over the meanings produced. However, the asymmetrical power relations that exist in a social context may lead to identity conflicts and marginalisation during the negotiation process because of participants' inability to appropriate their meanings within the community. The 'ownership of meanings' of the powerless may then be deprived of by the powerful group, leading to meaning appropriation outside the community and hence resulting in disengagement and alienation. In a community which is well organised, the lack of negotiability may cause strict alignment or no alignment at all, leading to the inability to adapt to new circumstances and, even worse, 'a propensity to breakdowns' (p. 206).

Wenger's (1998) theory of social ecology of identity narrows the focus onto an individual from a social perspective and expands the focus beyond communities of practice by drawing on broader identification processes and social structures. It offers a powerful framework to explain the complex identity formation in Martin's hall experience as a local-non-local 'hybrid'.

Contextualising the inquiry

The university concerned had a student population of around 27,000 during the time of study, among which one-third (approximately 9,300) were non-local students from over 80 countries. In line with the university local to non-local student ratio, one-third of the places were allocated for non-local students in the residential hall in the study. There were in total 300 undergraduates living in the hall and 100 of them came from different parts of the world, although two-third of the non-local population was from Mainland China.

Hall life is a key element of students' university experience and 'hall education' plays a crucial role in their whole-person development (Yang & Chau, 2011). Each hall has its own culture and tradition and offers a variety of sports and cultural activities. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the hall community and develop a sense of belonging. They start building up their social network in orientation camps (o-camps) before school term starts every year, one for local and one for non-local students. The local o-camp has been established since the foundation of the hall decades ago, when the hall was primarily resided by local elites, so it has long been conducted in Cantonese. It resembles a military training camp which creates a physically and psychologically intense environment for freshmen to experience adversity and cultivate a sense of unity. Through different programmes, freshmen learn the hall traditions and values. On the other hand, the non-local o-camp has only been running for a few years after the university started emphasising internationalisation. It has been conducted in English, with occasional Mandarin translations for mainland Chinese students. The atmosphere is relaxing, considering that non-local students may not be able to bear the stress as in the local o-camp and its aim is simply to let them get adapted to a new living environment. All freshmen are

told at the hall admission interview that the local o-camp is conducted in Cantonese before they agree to join. Those who have difficulty speaking Cantonese are advised to join the non-local o-camp.

While the university has been promoting intercultural communication and integration with the use of ELF on campus, because the majority of students are Hong Kong Chinese who speak Cantonese as their first language (L1), the local o-camp, hall activities, meetings and daily conversations are predominantly conducted in Cantonese. English is rarely spoken officially except in the non-local o-camp and compulsory hall activities such as the monthly High-table dinner and occasional floor meetings where non-local residents are involved, although written information related to hall issues posted online and within the hall premise has been increasingly bilingual (English and Chinese).

Methodology

The inquiry is ethnographic in the sense that it involved extended participant observations of the environment, in which I was 'immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people' (Creswell, 2013, p. 90). Having been a resident tutor of the hall for over four years by the time of the study, I had lived with the participants and had extensive opportunities to understand the lived experience and meaning-making activities in the research field. This allowed me to achieve high levels of 'sympathetic understanding', which is 'the foundation of ethnography' (Kelly, 2010, p. 49; see also Hammersley, 2010). Field notes had been jotted down with photographs to record the events happening in the hall throughout the period of study, which facilitated my ongoing interpretation of residents' hall experience and stimulated my memory when writing their stories.

In addition to ethnographic participant observations, the study adopted a narrative research paradigm (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) through a variety of instruments, including formal interviews, informal talks and participants' Facebook posts and photographs. As Creswell (2013) suggests, '[n]arrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories of life experiences of a single individual' (pp. 73-74) and narrative stories can 'shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves' (p. 71). Webster and Mertova (2007) add that 'narrative inquiry […] is well suited to addressing the issues of complexity and cultural and human centredness in research' (p. 3). Martin was purposefully selected as the participant because he was identified as 'a 'marginal person' who lives in conflicting cultures' (Creswell, 2013, p. 147). I got to know Martin when he applied for admission to our hall. I was one of the interviewers during the admission process. Since then, we had lived in the same hall and had informal talks through participating in hall activities for two years.

Martin and I had had intensive face-to-face conversations about his hall life through formal interviews.[4] We met twice at the end of his third semester within two weeks for about one hour each, and a final interview for another hour after he had finished his second year study and left the hall. The first interview was a narrative inquiry of Martin's life before and after coming to the university and his hall experience. In the interview, I probed for relevant information from the perspective of an insider having lived in the hall for years, which increased my 'wakefulness', being conscious about critical issues that might impact the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). After that, I started writing Martin's narratives. During the writing process, I collected Martin's stories by browsing through his photographs and posts on Facebook related to his hall experience. Beneito-Montagut (2011, p. 731) describes the use of Facebook as an 'expanded ethnography that allows in-depth studies of

online and offline social interaction and that pays more attention to the micro-level of social interaction'. Baker (2013) also suggests that Facebook offers great opportunity for ethnographic researchers to communicate with participants, especially young adults, and collect rich data about people's life. To make Martin's stories more accurate, I co-constructed the stories through frequent conversations with Martin face-to-face and online chat via Facebook. This strengthened the collaborative feature of narrative research (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008). In the second interview, I asked Martin to comment on the narratives I wrote for member checking. The narrative also served as a stimulated recall in the second interview when I dug deeper into his hall experience and asked for more elaborations (Gass & Mackey, 2000). These allowed me to have a more in-depth and holistic understanding of Martin's hall experience. The final interview allowed Martin to reflect on his two-year hall experience from the perspective of an 'outsider' who had left the hall.

The combination of the my ethnographic observations and informal talks with Martin in the research field for the period of two years, his Facebook posts and photographs as records of his hall life and the three intensive face-to-face interviews generated rich data of the narrative inquiry.

The data was analysed in the following manner. First, the transcribed interview data, the posts on Martin's Facebook and my field notes were sorted in chronological order (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), from the day he got admitted to the hall as a freshman to the time of the first interview when he finished his third semester at the university. This gradually formed the plot of Martin's narratives, which were further negotiated through informal talks via Facebook and the second and the third face-to-face formal interviews. The process involved active collaboration between Martin and me, which increased the validity to the analysis

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The data was then categorised according to the identity conflicts that Martin experienced and the attitudes about the use of English in the hall from both a local and non-local student's perspective. The complexity of Martin's identity formation was analysed with Wenger's (1998) framework of social ecology of identity – the duality of identification and negotiability.

Martin's narrative inquiry

Martin was born and raised in Hong Kong until he reached Primary one, when he emigrated to Australia with his parents. He spoke Cantonese at home most of the time, with some occasions code-switching to English. Martin grew up in Australia and he identified himself as an 'Aussie'. He went to a local primary school and a local high school. His social circle was mainly Asian, and they communicated in English. Coming back to Hong Kong for his tertiary education, Martin experienced an identity crisis, considering himself neither a local nor non-local. When I asked whether he would still consider himself an 'Aussie', he responded:

> That's the funny thing. The funny thing for me is, growing up in Australia, we get racially discriminated. We are called the Asian; we get called names. So I strongly identified myself as an Asian when I was in Australia. But it's funny, coming back to Hong Kong, I get cold by saying 'oh you are so white-washed! You are so not Asian. You are so non-local!' So personally for me *I am like in the middle of nowhere*, but I would say I'm from Australia, but, I don't know, like, I would call myself… well, I'm Chinese. I am from China, but, at the same time, it makes me, coming back, realise how 'un-Chinese' I am. *It's hard to fit in both sides*. [Emphasis added]

Martin found it difficult to situate his identity either as a Chinese or an 'Aussie' when he had come back to Hong Kong. He sensed a big cultural gap between Hong Kong and Australia, and he found it difficult to blend into the local culture. The main difficulty for him to adapt to the Hong Kong university lifestyle was the intense local hall culture and language barrier. This section narrates Martin's two-year hall life, starting from the first day he joined the hall and participated in the hall o-camp as a local freshman to the day he finished his second year when he possessed a dual local-non-local identity.

Constructing a local identity

Because Martin was able to speak Cantonese in the admission interview, he was invited to join the local o-camp. The local o-camp lasted for an intensive ten-day period packed with hall and floor programmes. A freshman needed to complete all the tasks successfully in the whole o-camp in order to be fully recognised as a member of the hall. In the o-camp, freshmen had to follow the order of current residents, who had power over them. Martin described it as a 'social hierarchy'. He recalled an incident when he learnt the cheers in Cantonese:

> I couldn't read the Chinese initially. The cheers were in Chinese. I got yelled at when I couldn't say it properly. That was a really big problem that I faced, given that atmosphere because they yelled at you. […] I felt frustrated, asked [hallmates] to put pinyin[5] on top so I became, like, just put pinyin that I could memorise.

During the first semester after the o-camp, like many other local freshmen, Martin had a very intense hall schedule, and he considered hall life 'demanding' and 'tough'. He was too busy dealing with hall activities to make friends with non-local students.

Unfortunately, although he spent all his time interacting with local hall-mates, he still found it hard to make friends with them because of language issues:

> Sometimes when you speak English, you sound like you are cocky. I get that. I understand that, so I really do try my best to speak Cantonese. I don't want to be like I can speak English well. I naturally don't have the vocab. So, naturally, I code-mix with some English words. Apparently to a certain extent it is like boasting, like showing off. So I try not to. […] For me, if I pop up something, I have to process in English and then translate into Cantonese, so that's lagging me. So that's definitely a language communication problem. It's always more comfortable to speak English.

Despite the difficulty to speak pure Cantonese and avoid code-mixing with English, Martin still tried his best to participate in hall activities. Because of his passion in music, he chose to participate in the hall choir. He considered it 'decent' because 'music is language' and it made him stress-free and able to express himself freely and he got a sense of satisfaction in performances.

Martin had the 'localisation mind-set' in semester one, so he tried very hard to localise. He participated and went through the language difficulty and pressure from social hierarchy in the local o-camp. He also tried to project a more local identity by minimising the use of English while interacting with local hall-mates. He enjoyed participating in hall activities which fitted his interest and required 'no language'. Because of the busy hall schedule, he did not have time and energy to reach out to make friends with non-local students until the second semester.

Reaching out – forming a non-local identity

In semester two, Martin started expanding his social circle to the non-local community. This began in the choir, when he had a non-local team-mate from Pakistan. He said:

> We became very good friends and we are still friends now. So in the second semester I got to get in touch with non-local students. That's why I started to realise, I could reach out non-locals. In semester two, I met my friend's friends and I started having my non-local circle. I found it a lot more comfortable. I feel like home when I speak to them. We share a similar background, have similar high school stories.

Blending into a new social circle, while feeling more comfortable, Martin struggled with his identity. This was because he got a sense of isolation from the local hall-mates when he reached out to the non-local circle. The more isolated he felt, the more disengaged he was with the local residents. However, he considered that moment 'a wake-up call' for him. At that time, Martin had a strong sense of disengagement from the local social circle. He explained that by doing so, he could free up more time to reflect on what he had been doing in his first year hall life. He realised that he should not simply follow the social norm in the hall dominated by the local community, which was not actually what he wanted. As semesters progressed, Martin's identity changed from purely a local to partly non-local. Although he did not like the labelling of 'local' and 'non-local' and would rather call himself a 'university student', he acknowledged that he would consider himself to be partly non-local based on his social circle. He said:

I have different groups of friends, but my friends usually go with friends who are non-local. I mean from that perspective, yeah, I am a non-local person, but I want to, I'm from Hong Kong, I'm like… I was born in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is my hometown. And I would like to be identified with a place of being in Hong Kong. It's kind of sad to feel outcast by your own people. It's something hard to deal with. It's like… we look the same. Technically we speak the same language, but yes, you can feel the distance. So from that perspective I think I am a non-local.

The non-local social circle Martin interacted within shared similar cultural understanding with him. He also added that after he had been promoted to Year Two, he was no longer at the bottom of the 'social hierarchy' when those senior local residents who gave him pressure to localise had graduated and the new cohort of freshmen became the focus of attention. He felt more 'free to choose' the identity he wanted to possess.

Being a 'hybrid' – trying to bridge local and non-local students

Having experienced both the local and non-local identities, Martin had a more holistic and critical view about cultural integration at hall. While acknowledging that the cultural diversity at hall could open the window of internationalisation in higher education, he understood that the contextual reality could create challenges. In Year Two when he lived a more comfortable and free hall life without suffering too much pressure from the 'social hierarchy', he wanted to promote cultural integration at hall. However, because of the intense schedule of the local o-camp, local students had no time to interact with the non-local. The non-local o-camp turned out to be the orientation for the non-local themselves. Martin elaborated:

Me and my friend really wanted to integrate local and non-local. I would say it

was my first agenda, but we ran into problems. I was asking my seniors… [the

Hall Student Association] won't prioritise integration between local and

non-local. They want the local and local to be more integrated first before they

want to integrate with the non-local. By the time it happens, the non-local

already feel segregated. So at the end of the day, our agenda became integration

between non-local and non-local. […] We recruited [local] helpers, but the

response was flat.

Martin pointed out that he negotiated with the Hall Student Association to arrange

time for some activities involving both local and non-local residents to facilitate

cultural integration, but in the end he was rejected because the schedule of the local

o-camp was too tight and the Association was afraid the non-local would 'disturb' the

intense atmosphere created and the long established programmes to pass on hall

traditions. He was disappointed but he felt powerless, because the Association had the

ultimate power to decide how hall activities were organised. He tried to voice out in

hall campaigns, which were organised every year to evaluate the performance of the

committee members of the Association and the activities they organised, but he did

not think his voice was heard:

On the hall level, I don't know what else I can do. Speaking in campaign, I don't

think it's useful. I spoke out last year, not very much was done. Well, I don't

expect them to do it straight away, but I mean, I don't think they take [my

opinion] into account.

He encouraged non-local students to voice out, but he also realised the difficulties:

> There is a huge conflict of interest which stops people from speaking out. You
> can't deny that, because, if you voice out, there will be a social backlash, and
> you can get kicked out of the hall. […] I tried to voice out in campaign, but, that
> was it. Also, one thing is, campaign is conducted in Cantonese, so non-local
> can't really speak out.

The fact that the Association had long been composed of local residents only might have caused the negligence of non-local residents' voices, as Martin acknowledged. He suggested including non-local residents to be part of the Association, but at the same time understood that English instead of Cantonese would need to be used in meetings, which might lower the efficiency as the majority of committee members had to use a second language for communication.

While feeling powerless to change the situation of the hall, Martin still wanted to bridge the local and non-local students on the floor he resided. For example, he created opportunities for local and non-local hall-mates to communicate. However, students who are not native English speakers may feel uncomfortable expressing themselves in English. Martin explained:

> I think definitely [language] plays a very large part. It's like me not being very
> fluent in Cantonese sometimes I feel worried to speak out. It's the same thing.

To further elaborate the problem of language issues, Martin went on to describe his experience of joining a hall team with some of his non-local friends. He indicated that his friends did not feel that they fitted in or belonged to the team because of the dominant use of Cantonese, despite occasional switching to English for a topic or two at the dinner after team practice. As Martin was bilingual and regarded himself as a 'bridge' between the local and non-local team-mates, while mingling with the local

team-mates, he could feel that his non-local friends were not respected enough in the team because of the use of a language that some did not speak instead of a common language that everyone in the team could understand.

Reflecting on his hall experience in the four semesters, Martin expressed his attitudes about cultural integration at hall. Before he came to the university, he knew that English would be used as a medium of instruction and thought Cantonese would be sometimes used in conversations with friends, but he expected English would have been used more in daily communications among students. He respected people speaking their mother tongue, but he commented that using Cantonese all the time would disadvantage people who do not speak the language and this could cause cultural exclusion. He also expressed his dissatisfaction with the deep-rooted local hall culture and the labelling of 'local' and 'non-local' in the university, which did not help cultural integration. He concluded that hall might not be a good environment to use English because, in order to blend into the hall culture, which was dominated by local residents, he had to consciously make an effort to speak Cantonese. The use of English was not encouraged because the local students would find it more comfortable to speak Cantonese, and this sacrificed the opportunity to integrate local and non-local students. Although Martin commented that it was human nature for 'the local to conform to the local' and 'the non-local conform to the non-local', hall-mates should not only explore the local hall culture but also reach out to learn the 'fascinating cultures' around the world.

Discussion

Martin's narratives showed the complexities of identity formation as both a local and non-local undergraduate, which can be explained by Wenger's (1998) framework of social ecology of identity.

Membership and categorisation

Participants in a community invest themselves to associate or differentiate with other members through identification and categorisation. It is both participative and reificative of 'identifying' and 'being identified' (Wenger, 1998, p. 191). When Martin came back to Hong Kong discovering the cultural gap between Hong Kong and Australia, despite his local origin, he struggled with his own identity as he found it difficult to fit into either the local or non-local community. This identity crisis created "self-uncertainty" (Hogg, 2012) about who he was and which group he belonged to. To reduce uncertainty, Martin 'chose' to be a local freshman and participate in the local o-camp, not only because he held a Hong Kong identification card but more importantly he believed and was believed that he had enough competence to speak Cantonese. Such a self-categorisation to be a local, together with the categorisation by the two separate o-camps on the basis of language from the outset, led Martin to an identity and membership of the local hall community.

In order to have legitimate access to the local community with full membership, Martin needed the competence to speak Cantonese. As Wenger (1998) observes, the process of identity formation requires the recognition of a person's competence that the community values. Martin used Cantonese for communication with local hall-mates, although he encountered difficulties when he learnt the cheers and got yelled at by senior residents during the o-camp. By 'choosing' to use Cantonese, he displayed his acts of identity and demonstrated his competence and relationship with

the local community (Edu-Buandoh & Otchere, 2012). However, his incompetence to speak pure Cantonese led to frequent code-mixing between Cantonese and English. This gave a negative impression to his local peers that he was boasting his English ability. Therefore, although students' high English proficiency was supposed to be an advantage for internationalisation, Martin felt the necessity to undermine the use of English in order to align with the norm and expectations of the members in the local community. His self-categorisation, as Hogg (2012) noted, depersonalised himself since he tried to suppress his English competence and demonstrate that he had the attributes of the local category.

Martin's access to the non-local community in the second semester was an important source of his identity formation as a local-non-local hybrid. In the non-local community, Martin was comfortable speaking EFL with members of similar background. This situation is 'optimal fit' in that categorisation 'becomes the basis of self-categorization, group identification, and prototype-based depersonalization' (Hogg, 2012, p. 510). This means that Martin's self-categorisation as a non-local was in harmony with the social group because he intrinsically shared the group's attributes. However, having in mind that he was born in Hong Kong and his past experience as a local freshman in the previous semester, Martin struggled with his identity and membership, leading him to challenging the labelling of 'local' and 'non-local'. Tsui (2014) argued that such 'naming' leads to stereotyping and 'othering', resulting in cultural segregation and disharmony in internationalisation. Martin's gradual resistance to such categorisation may have formed his hybrid identity to integrate the two groups.

Participation as identity construction

Martin's identity as a local resident had been constructed since his participation in the local community at the beginning of his hall life. While he felt frustrated with the social hierarchy and the power relations created under the o-camp intense atmosphere as well as the hall life, he still tried to align with and engage himself in the community through participation. The effort and enormous time he invested to engage in the local community, in turn, disengaged him from the non-local community in the hall. He felt oppressed with the situation where he needed to follow the norm that was different from what he expected an international university should be like, such as the dominant use of Cantonese at hall. To free himself from oppression, Martin chose to participate in choir, where music is the common language, so that his lack of competence in speaking Cantonese would not become a barrier for him to engage in the practice. At that time, meeting a non-local friend, Martin started to disengage from the local community, reach out, and engage in the non-local community. Such an act is in line with Wenger's observation that when participants feel uncomfortable with the submission and the power relations in the community and feel that their identity is invaded, they will 'dissociate themselves from their oppressors' (p. 197).

Martin's non-participation in the local community reinforced his participation in the non-local community. In Wenger's (1998) term, this shows 'peripherality', in which non-participation becomes 'an opportunity for learning' (p. 166) in the trajectory of identity formation. When Martin started to make friends with non-local students in the second semester, he found himself living a more comfortable hall life. By investing himself in the non-local community, which recognised him as a member, he was not under social pressure to speak pure Cantonese since English was a *lingua franca* in the community. As Tsui (2014) observed, the use of a *lingua franca* becomes a necessity for participation in a community with members from diverse

linguistic backgrounds. Martin's non-local identity was then constructed when he learnt that his competence in English naturally allowed him to participate in the non-local community.

When he was promoted to Year Two, Martin felt more 'free' because he was no longer at the bottom of the social hierarchy in the hall, so he felt less pressured interacting with local hall-mates. He tried to align with both the local and non-local communities with 'the kind of subtle mix of participation and non-participation' (Wenger, 1998, p. 196). In the end, he identified himself as a bridge between the local and non-local communities. This also blurred the imagined boundaries between the two communities and aligned with his original expectation of simply being a 'university student' in an internationalised university instead of being identified as either local or non-local.

Negotiability and power

Negotiability, in Wenger's framework, is another important constituent of identity formation. It allows participants to appropriate their meanings and assert their membership in a community. It is shaped by 'ownership of meaning', which involves the degree to which participants can take control of their meanings. However, in Martin's case, when he was living in the hall, the existence of social hierarchy and deep-rooted local hall culture undermined negotiability and created social coercion. This is evidenced by the incident of being yelled at when he failed to learn the cheers in Cantonese in the local o-camp. He was unable to appropriate his meaning as a university student who should use English in an English-medium university as he expected because of the existing power relations and the confined socio-cultural context in the hall.

When Martin reached out to make friends with non-local residents, he was able to claim 'ownership of meaning'. As his non-local friends had similar experience of studying abroad before being admitted to the university, he could share ownership of meaning with them, which 'can widen participation in [meaning] production and thus increase ownership for all participants' (Wenger, 1998, p. 200). Martin could appropriate his meanings in the non-local community, where he could speak English and felt more comfortable. This aligned with his expectation towards university life and his college experience in Australia, where he interacted with people from different countries and spoke ELF. This agrees with Wenger's saying that:

> You must choose between your own experience as a resource for the production
> of meaning and your membership in a community where your competence is
> determined by your adoption of other's proposals for meaning. (p. 203)

Martin's non-local identity was formed with the collective production of meaning in the non-local community and his competence of using English for communication and his experience of studying overseas. This caused his engagement and participation in the non-local community.

When Martin was no longer under external pressure from senior residents in the hall when he was promoted to Year Two, he was able to produce meaning and try to appropriate it in the hall context. Wenger (1998) stated that negotiability involves the ability to shape and hence claim ownership of meanings which matter in the community. As a local-non-local 'hybrid', Martin experienced the inclusion as well as exclusion from membership in both the local and non-local communities, and therefore wanted to integrate local and non-local students. This goal created negotiability through imagination, leading Martin to joining the non-local o-camp as

an organising committee. However, because of the power of the Hall Student Association to control how hall activities were organised, even though Martin voiced the need to prioritise integration between local and non-local students in the non-local o-camp, he failed to appropriate his meaning. This agrees with the dual nature of power in Wenger's framework (1998) that Martin's 'identification [as the bridge between the local and non-local communities] without negotiability is powerless' (p. 208). Martin also understood that his powerlessness could also be attributed to the deep-rooted contextual reality of the hall tradition and culture, which undermined negotiability. These may have led to Martin's disappointment and breakdowns.

Conclusion

This article has explored the identity formation of a local-non-local 'hybrid' and problematized the use of ELF in a multicultural and multilingual residential hall under internationalisation. It has further justified the misconception that internationalisation could naturally occur by simply 'bringing students from diverse backgrounds into the same physical space' (Tsui, 2014, p. 90). Through Martin's narrative inquiry of his hall experience from the perspectives of both a local and non-local resident, it can be seen that student living environment does not necessarily provide enough opportunities for them to use English even though it is a part of an English-medium university. This can be attributed to the power relations created under social hierarchy established in o-camps, deep-rooted local hall culture and the intense hall activity schedule for the local residents, which gives them limited time to interact with non-local students. The reluctance to use English as a communication tool among local students within the hall environment may also lead to social exclusion. To strengthen the relationship among local students and establish their membership in the

hall community, local students tend to use their mother tongue and avoid using English. This causes disengagement and non-participation from those who do not have a local background, let alone those who are not fluent in or cannot even speak Cantonese. Using English in the local community may lead to alienation and marginalisation because of the non-alignment with the local 'norm'. The use of English is only limited to the non-local community as a *lingua franca* but not the local one, and the difference in languages can cause social and cultural segregation. This seems to go against the aim of internationalisation within university. Therefore, as Egron-Polak (2012) suggests,

> institutions need to act on the full spectrum of internationalization, not simply
>
> focusing on one or two dimensions, for example on promoting mobility by
>
> sending students abroad and recruiting massively for their classrooms. (p. 69)

English-medium universities which aim to truly achieve the goal of internationalisation may need to understand that the processes of identity formation of undergraduates with different cultural backgrounds are highly complex and the use of languages and existing traditions and cultures in out-of-class contexts may lead to various degrees of participation for different students. Policymakers may undertake various efforts to facilitate the use of English and promote a sense of cultural integration not only in in-class but also out-of-class contexts. For example, they may explore the opportunities of negotiating with student associations to expand their traditional cultures to the non-local communities and conduct activities in English. They may also offer more English courses for students to build up their confidence and increase their proficiency in speaking conversational English. While the current study has revealed a unique case which demonstrated the identity formation from a

local and non-local student perspectives, further research may examine how local students perceive the use of English in their living environments and how non-local students feel when they live in a multicultural context where English is only used in part of the community. Only by understanding the opportunities and challenges of different parties in different contexts can the goal of true internationalisation in higher education be achieved.

Notes

1. This paper adopts Kirkpatrick's (2011, p. 213) definition of a *lingua franca* as 'a common language between people who do not share a mother tongue.' For further discussion, see for example Jenkins (2011) and Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (2013).

2. To protect the real identity of the participant, Martin, all personal names, names of the university and the residential hall are fictitious. However, this does not in any way affect the authenticity of the stories.

3. 'Local' here refers to students who possess a Hong Kong identity card and pay the local tuition fee at the university.

4. Prior to the interviews, I sought Martin's formal consent and reassured him that everything he said would be kept in strict confidence. To avoid any potential conflict of interest which may affect the trustworthiness of the data, I reassured Martin that I would not participate in the evaluation of his hall performance during the hall readmission process so that he could express his views more freely. The interviews were conducted in English, as Martin chose, and audio-recorded for transcription.

5. Pinyin is the standard system of Romanised spelling for transliterating Chinese.

References

Baker, S. (2013). Conceptualising the use of Facebook in ethnographic research: As tool, as data and as context. *Ethnography and Education, 8*(2), 131-145. doi: 10.1080/17457823.2013.792504

Beneito-Montagut, R. (2011). Ethnography goes online: towards a user-centred methodology to research interpersonal communication on the internet. *Qualitative Research, 11*(6), 716-735. doi: 10.1177/1468794111413368

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Edu-Buandoh, D. F., & Otchere, G. (2012). "Speak English!" A prescription or choice of English as a lingua franca in Ghanaian schools. *Linguistics and Education, 23*(3), 301-309. doi: 10.1016/j.linged.2012.06.003

Egron-Polak, E. (2012). Internationalization of higher education: A few global trends and regional perspectives. In C. Ennew & D. Greenaway (Eds.), *The globalization of higher education* (pp. 57-69). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Egron-Polak, E., Hudson, R., & International Association of Universities. (2010). *Internationalization of higher education: Global trends regional perspectives - IAU 3rd Global survey report*. Paris: International Association of Universities.

Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2000). *Stimulated recall methodology in second language research*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Hammersley, M. (2010). Ethnography. In P. Peterson, E. Baker & B. McGaw (Eds.),

International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition) (pp. 386-391).

Oxford: Elsevier.

Hogg, M. A. (2012). Social identity and the psychology of groups. In M. R. Leary &

J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed., pp. 502-519).

New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Jenkins, J. (2011). Accommodating (to) ELF in the international university. *Journal*

of Pragmatics, 43(4), 926-936. doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2010.05.011

Jiang, X. (2008). Towards the internationalisation of higher education from a critical

perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 32*(4), 347-358. doi:

10.1080/03098770802395561

Kelly, B. (2010). Exploring the dilemma of mutual influence in ethnographic

research. In G. S. Szarycz (Ed.), *Research realities in the social sciences:*

Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas (pp. 45-66). Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). English as an Asian lingua franca and the multilingual model

of ELT. *Language Teaching, 44*(02), 212-224. doi:

10.1017/S0261444810000145

Kirkpatrick, A. (2014). English as a medium of instruction in East and Southeast

Asian universities. In N. Murray & A. Scarino (Eds.), *Dynamic ecologies: A*

Relational Perspective on Languages Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

(pp. 15-30). New York, NY: Springer.

Knight, J. (2013). The changing landscape of higher education internationalisation –

for better or worse? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education,*

17(3), 84-90. doi: 10.1080/13603108.2012.753957

Law, W.-W. (1996). The Taiwanisation, Democratisation and Internationalisation of

    Higher Education in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 16*(1), 56-73.

    doi: 10.1080/02188799608542611

Oleksiyenko, A., Cheng, K. M., & Yip, H. K. (2012). International student mobility in

    Hong Kong: Private good, public good, or trade in services? *Studies in Higher*

    Education, 38(7), 1079-1101. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.630726

Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative Research: A Comparison of

    Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(3),

    329-347. doi: 10.1177/10778004008003008

Pellegrino, V. A. (2005). *Study abroad and second language use: Constructing the*

    self. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles, CA:

    Sage.

Rivers, D. J. (2010). Ideologies of internationalisation and the treatment of diversity

    within Japanese higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and*

    Management, 32(5), 441-454. doi: 10.1080/1360080x.2010.511117

Tham, S. Y., & Kam, A. J. Y. (2008). Internationalising higher education: Comparing

    the challenges of different higher education institutions in Malaysia. *Asia*

    Pacific Journal of Education, 28(4), 353-367. doi:

    10.1080/02188790802468880

Tsui, A. B. M. (2014). English as lingua franca on campus: Cultural integration or

    segregation? In N. Murray & A. Scarino (Eds.), *Dynamic ecologies: A*

    Relational Perspective on Languages Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

    (pp. 75-94). New York, NY: Springer.

University Grants Committee. (2004). *Hong Kong higher education - To make a difference - To move with the times report*. Hong Kong: University Grants Committee.

Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English. (2013). from http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/

Wang, L. (2013). Going global: the changing strategy of internationalisation of education in China. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35*(3), 305-315. doi: 10.1080/1360080x.2013.792315

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. London: Routledge.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Yang, M., & Chau, A. (2011). Social involvement and development as a response to the campus student culture. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 12*(3), 393-402. doi: 10.1007/s12564-011-9149-x